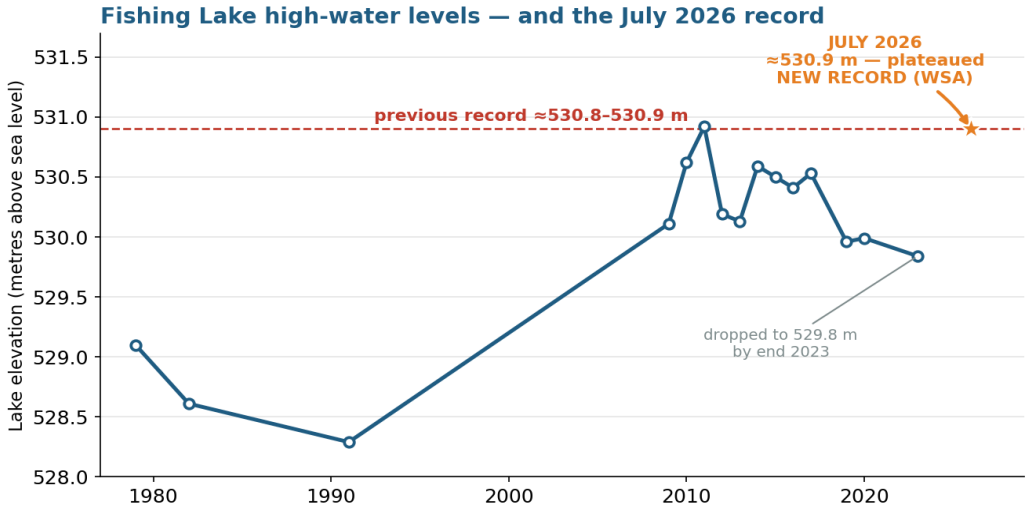
COMMUNITY WATER BRIEFING

FISHING LAKE

Saskatchewan

Water Levels, Flows & What They Mean



Fishing Lake yearly high-water levels, 1979-2026 - ending at the July 2026 record.

Subject	Fishing Lake - Water Survey of Canada gauge 05MB013, near Wadena (~22 km N of Foam Lake), SK
Reporting period	Full gauge record (from 1978) through July 2026
Prepared	July 2026
Data sources	Sask. Water Security Agency; Environment Canada / Water Survey of Canada; Natural Resources Canada
Prepared by	Kruel.ai Inc. · kruel.ai

Contents

Executive summary

Fishing Lake, near Foam Lake in east-central Saskatchewan, is a **high, nearly-closed basin** that fills quickly in wet years and drains only slowly - east through a chain of lakes and marsh to the Whitesand and Assiniboine Rivers. In **July 2026 it reached a record of about 530.9 m and has since plateaued there**. This briefing sets out the current situation, the full measured record back to 1978, how the water moves through the system, and simple math the community can use to anticipate outcomes.

Key points

- **Record high, now plateaued:** the lake climbed to about 530.9 m by early July - above the previous record (~530.8 m, 2014) and level with the all-time 2011 daily peak - and has held there since.
- **A wetter era:** after the 2007 flood the lake shifted from ~528-529 m (1980s-90s) to mostly 529.6-530.9 m, and has not returned to its old level.
- **Fast in, slow out:** a wet spring can add 0.4-0.6 m in weeks; evaporation and the flat, marshy outlet remove it only over months, so high water lingers for years.
- **One connected system, ~130 km:** Fishing Lake -> six lakes and marsh -> Whitesand River -> Assiniboine River -> Manitoba. Only two points on that whole run are gauged.
- **What the community can influence:** run the relief channel hard on the way down, keep berms sound, limit new upstream drainage, and plan for prolonged high water.

1. Current conditions — July 2026

⍰ Record high water — now holding at the peak

As of the Water Security Agency's **July 3, 2026 update**, summer rainfall pushed Fishing Lake to **record-high levels**. After a steep climb the lake **peaked at about 530.9 m in early July** — passing the previous record of ~530.8 m (2014), though just short of the 531 m WSA had projected — and has **plateaued there — peaking near 530.90 m and easing to 530.89 m by July 8**. Some berm sections could be overtopped, and **sandbagging has begun** around parts of the lake. Rural Municipalities, the WSA, and the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency are coordinating a response.

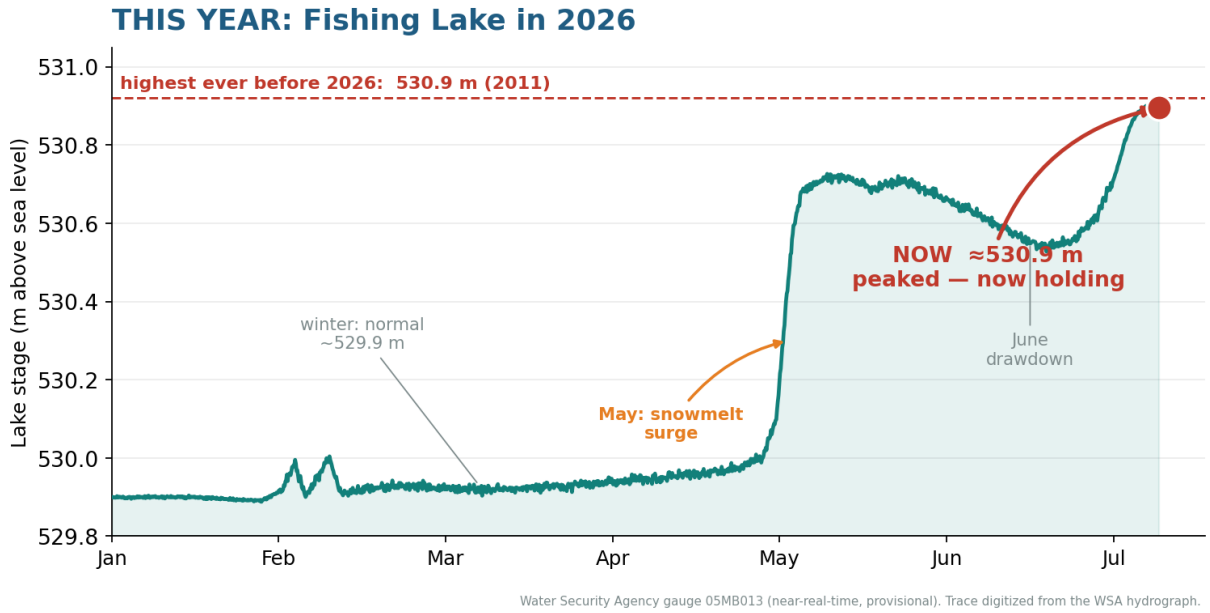


Figure 1. *Fishing Lake's actual 2026 gauge trace (WSA station 05MB013): flat near 529.9 m all winter, a jump to ~530.7 m from late-April snowmelt, a June drawdown, then a July surge past the old record to ~530.9 m, where it has plateaued (holding through July 8).*

And here is **how 2026 stacks up against every year on record** — it reached ~530.9 m — matching the all-time peak (2011) and far above most years — before levelling off:

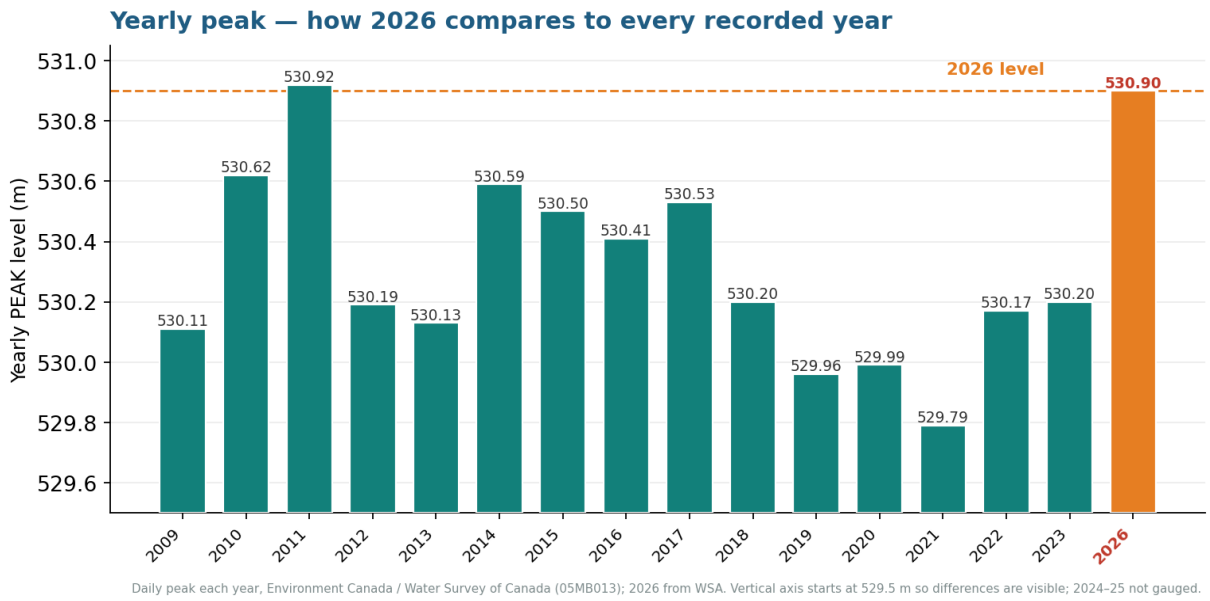


Figure 2. *Each year's highest level. 2026 (orange) reached the same height as the previous record year, 2011 — and has since plateaued.*

How it got here: after two years with the emergency channel gates held open, the lake had eased back to **near-normal by fall 2025**. Then a hard overwinter, late-spring snowstorms, higher-than-normal runoff, and heavy June–July rain stacked up and reversed all of that in a matter of weeks.

What WSA is doing: the channel gates are open (kept open even through winter, by agreement with Manitoba), and the **weir at the southeast corner of the lake was removed** to push more water out. Even so, in WSA's own words, “due to the flat nature of the area, only minimal outflow could be achieved.”

Fishing Lake — July 2026 snapshot	Value
Latest reading (Jul 8)	530.89 m — plateaued, easing slightly
Winter / normal pool	≈ 529.9 m
Spring plateau (May)	≈ 530.7 m
Previous record	≈ 530.8 m (2014)
Peak so far	≈ 530.90 m (~Jul 7)
Status	At record; steep rise has stopped
Active management	Channel gates open · SE weir removed · sandbagging
Source / date	WSA gauge 05MB013 — near-real-time, July 2026

Figure 3. *Live hourly gauge chart: wsask.ca/hydrographs/05MB013-hrly.html (linked in Sources).*

⍰ Why they can't just drain it away

This is the key thing for the community to understand. The relief channel **does not lower the peak** — the land is too flat for that. It is designed to **speed up the drawdown after** the lake crests, shortening how long the high water lasts. Even with the gates open and the weir pulled, full recovery takes months. The next section shows exactly how flat the land is and why.

The regional picture, live

The downstream rivers are in the national real-time feed and confirm how wet it is right now:

Nearby gauge (live, Jul 6 2026)	Reading	Meaning
Whitesand River near Canora	~175 m^3/s	High for July
Assiniboine River at Sturgis	~69.5 m^3/s	Elevated
Yorkton Creek near Ebenezer	~13.7 m^3/s	Running strong
Little Quill Lake (next basin over)	520.5 m	Also brim-full

Figure 4. *A river carrying ~175 cubic metres per second in July is a lot — like filling an Olympic pool every ~14 seconds.*

2. At a glance — the big picture

Fishing Lake is a **high-and-nearly-closed basin** — think of a giant natural bathtub with a **very high overflow lip**. Water pours in from rain and snowmelt, but it only leaves two ways: slowly, by evaporation, or by spilling **east toward Pelican Lake and the lake chain** once it climbs high enough. A relief channel dug after the 2007 flood helps it drain faster. Because the natural spill is so high and the land so flat, **water comes in fast and leaves slow** — which is why the lake floods and then stays high for a long time.

> **How to read "metres" here**
>
> Every level is metres **above sea level** (the same reference a GPS uses). So 531 m and 529.8 m compare directly — that ~1.2 m gap is a real, physical metre-plus of extra water depth across the whole lake.

3. Where the water comes from and goes

Fishing Lake sits near the top of a chain. Small creeks feed it from the north and west. When it rises high enough it **spills east toward Pelican Lake**, and the relief channel carries excess water on through Hazel, Whitesand and Dog Lakes into the Whitesand River — which joins the Assiniboine River and eventually flows into Manitoba.

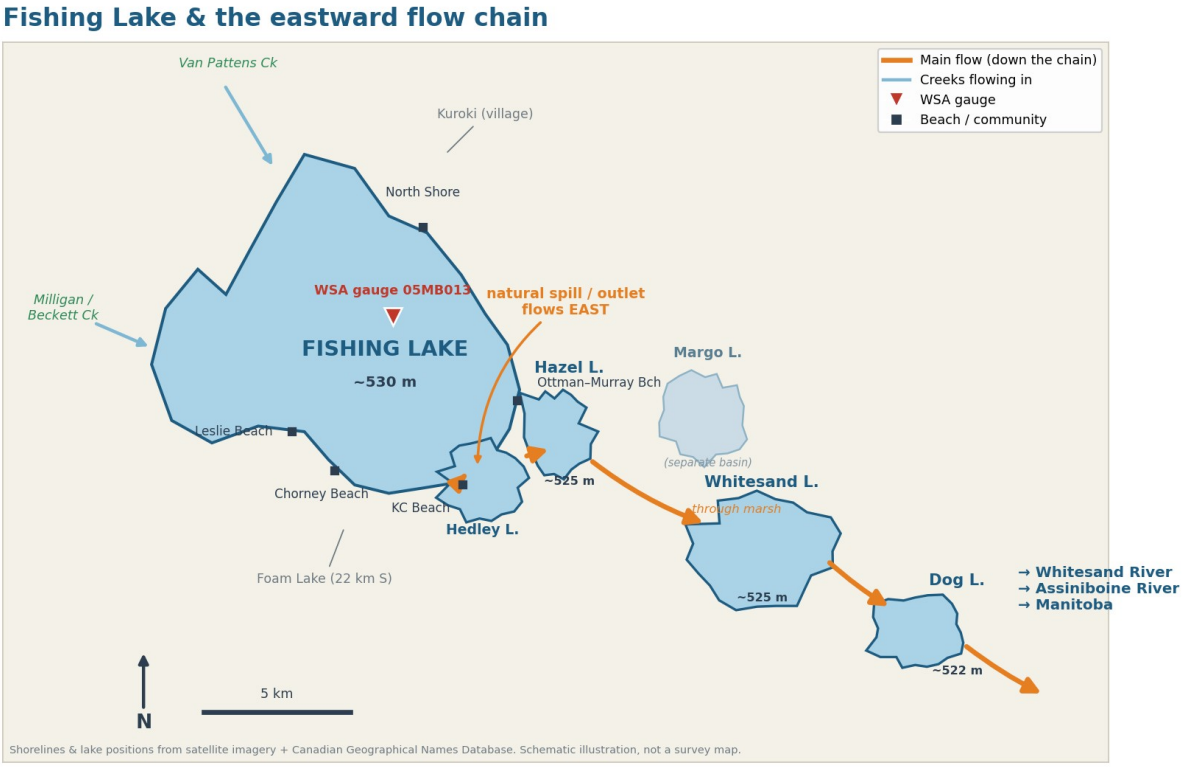


Figure 5. *Bird's-eye view: creeks feed Fishing Lake; the outlet at KC Beach spills east through Hedley and Hazel Lakes, then southeast through marsh to Whitesand and Dog Lakes — and on via Silver and Newburn Lakes (the aptly-named "Chain of Lakes") to the Whitesand and Assiniboine Rivers. Margo Lake is a separate basin. Shorelines simplified from satellite imagery; a schematic, not a survey map.*

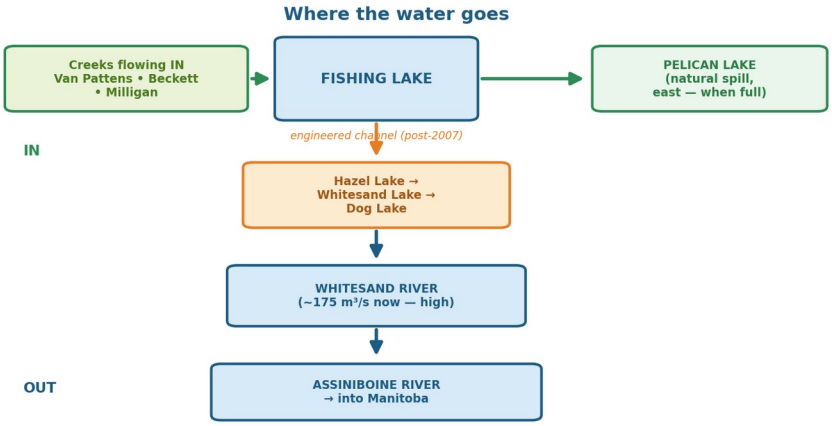


Figure 6. *The same path as a simple flow chart.*

4. The whole system, end to end

Zooming out, here is the entire journey the water takes — from Fishing Lake, down the chain of lakes, into the Whitesand River, on to the Assiniboine, and across the border into Manitoba:

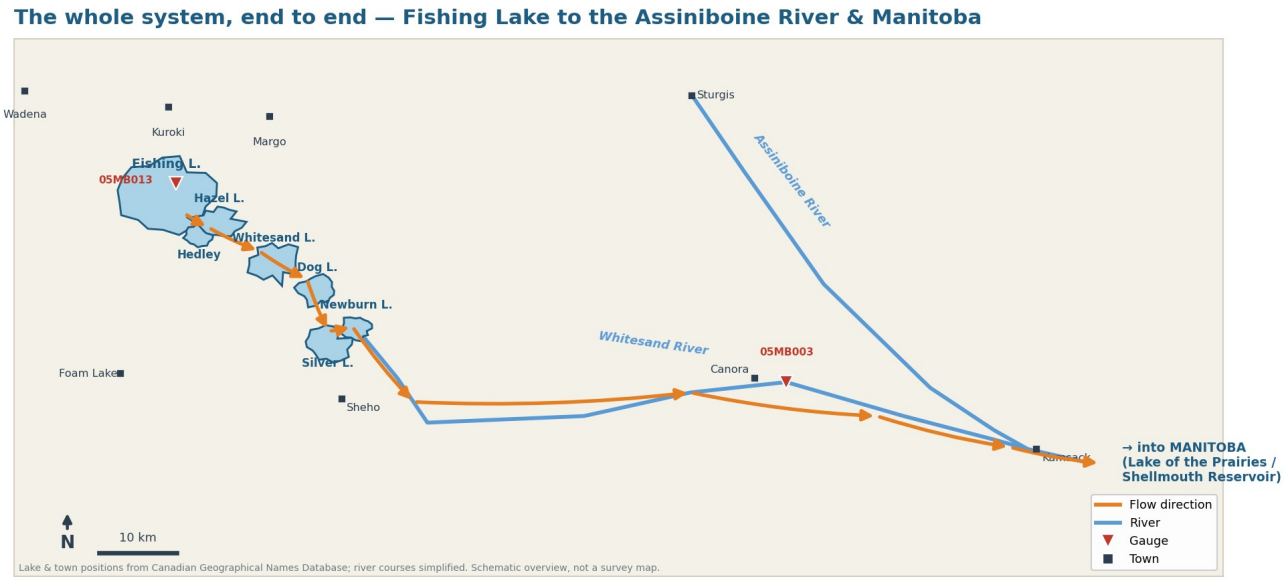


Figure 7. *The full run, about 130 km from Fishing Lake to the Manitoba border. Lake and town positions are from the Canadian Geographical Names Database; the river courses are simplified. Schematic overview, not a survey map.*

The full path — and how little of it is measured

Fishing Lake → Hedley → Hazel → Whitesand → Dog → Silver → Newburn Lakes → Whitesand River (past Sheho and Canora) **→ Assiniboine River** (at Kamsack) **→ into Manitoba** (Lake of the Prairies / Shellmouth Reservoir). Across that whole ~130 km run, only **two points are gauged**: Fishing Lake's level (05MB013) and the Whitesand River's flow near Canora (05MB003). Everything in between — six lakes and kilometres of marsh — is unmeasured.

5. The history, in numbers

The recorded high point for each year the gauge ran. The 2007 flood happened during a gap in the record, so it isn't a data point, but its aftermath (2009–2011) is — and 2026 now tops them all.

Year	High level (m)	What was happening
1979	529.10	Baseline, decades ago
1991	528.29	Pre-flood low
2009	530.11	Record resumes after the 2007 flood
2011	530.92	Top of the post-2007 surge
2014	≈530.8	Previous record (WSA)
2020	529.99	Back near normal pool
end 2023	529.84	Last officially approved reading
July 2026	≈531	★ NEW record — rising (WSA)

i A quick note on the record number

Federal and provincial figures differ slightly (about 530.6–530.9 m) depending on how the peak is

measured and rounded. The exact previous number matters less than the point everyone agrees on: **2026 is the highest the lake has ever been recorded.**

Plain-language version

Picture the bathtub filling to the brim in 2011 and 2014, easing down to near-normal by 2023, then — in 2026 — a wet spring topping it clean over the brim. Every extra metre of depth is **more than 37 billion litres** of water sitting in the basin.

6. The full record — every year we could find (1978–2026)

The WSA website only shows the recent chart, but the federal **Water Survey of Canada** archive keeps this gauge's **daily, monthly and yearly** data going back to **1978**. Here is the whole thing on one line:

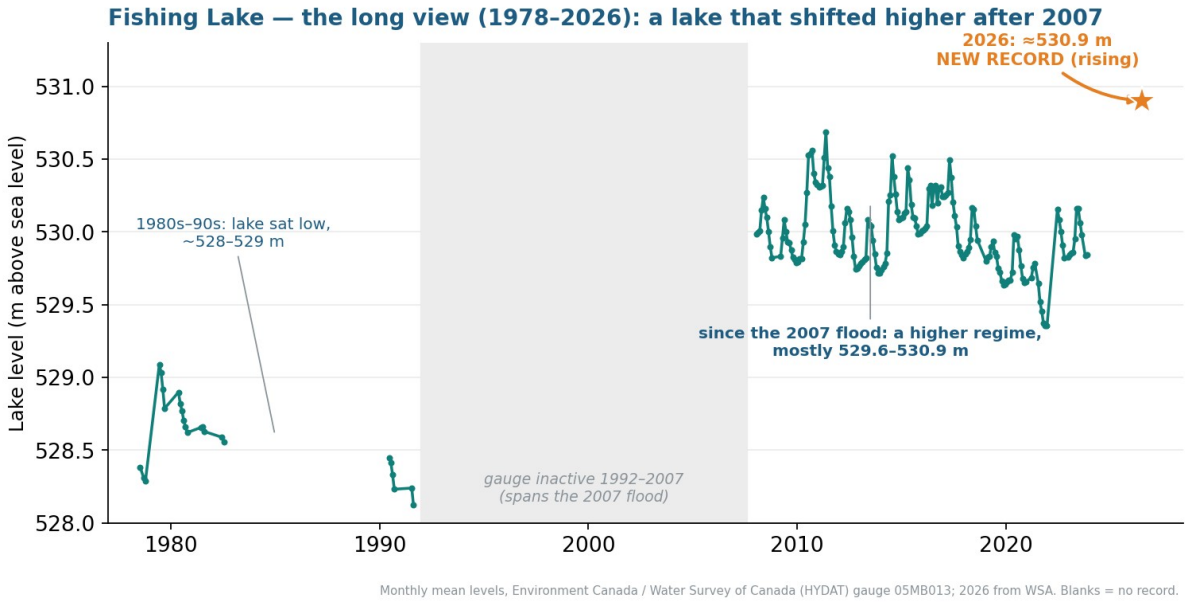


Figure 8. Every monthly-mean level on record for gauge 05MB013 (1978–2023), plus the 2026 reading. The grey band is the years the gauge was switched off — which happen to include the big 2007 flood.

The big-picture story: a wetter era

Through the 1980s–90s the lake sat **around 528–529 m**. The gauge was then off from 1992 to 2007, right across the major 2007 flood. When records resume in 2008 the lake is in a different world — **a metre-plus higher, mostly 529.6–530.9 m** — and it has stayed there ever since. 2026 is simply the top of that modern era. Whatever shifted around 2007 (a wetter climate cycle, more upstream drainage, or both), the lake **has not gone back down** to its old level.

Year-by-year (monthly-mean high and low)

These highs and lows are from **monthly-mean** levels, so they sit a little below the single-day peaks (2011's daily peak actually hit ~530.9 m). Blank spans = the gauge was not recording.

Year	High (m)	Low (m)	Era
1978	528.4	528.3	earliest record (partial)
1979	529.1	528.8	

Year	High (m)	Low (m)	Era
1980	528.9	528.6	
1981	528.7	528.6	
1982	528.6	528.6	the old, lower lake
1983–89	—	—	gauge not recording
1990	528.4	528.2	
1991	528.2	528.1	pre-flood low point
1992–2007	—	—	gauge inactive (incl. 2007 flood)
2008	530.2	529.8	records resume — already high
2009	530.1	529.8	
2010	530.6	529.8	
2011	530.7	529.9	daily peak ~530.9 m
2012	530.2	529.8	
2013	530.1	529.7	
2014	530.5	529.7	
2015	530.4	530.0	
2016	530.3	530.0	
2017	530.5	529.8	
2018	530.2	529.9	
2019	529.9	529.6	
2020	530.0	529.7	
2021	529.8	529.4	driest recent year
2022	530.2	529.8	
2023	530.2	529.8	last archived year
2026	≈530.9	rising	★ NEW record

7. How fast does it drain? The elevation drop

If the lake spills east, how fast does that water actually move? **Barely at all** — because the land is almost perfectly flat. WSA says the same thing about the outlet: it is “very flat and marshy, which naturally limits how quickly water can move out.” Here is the ground elevation along the eastward path, from the national elevation model:

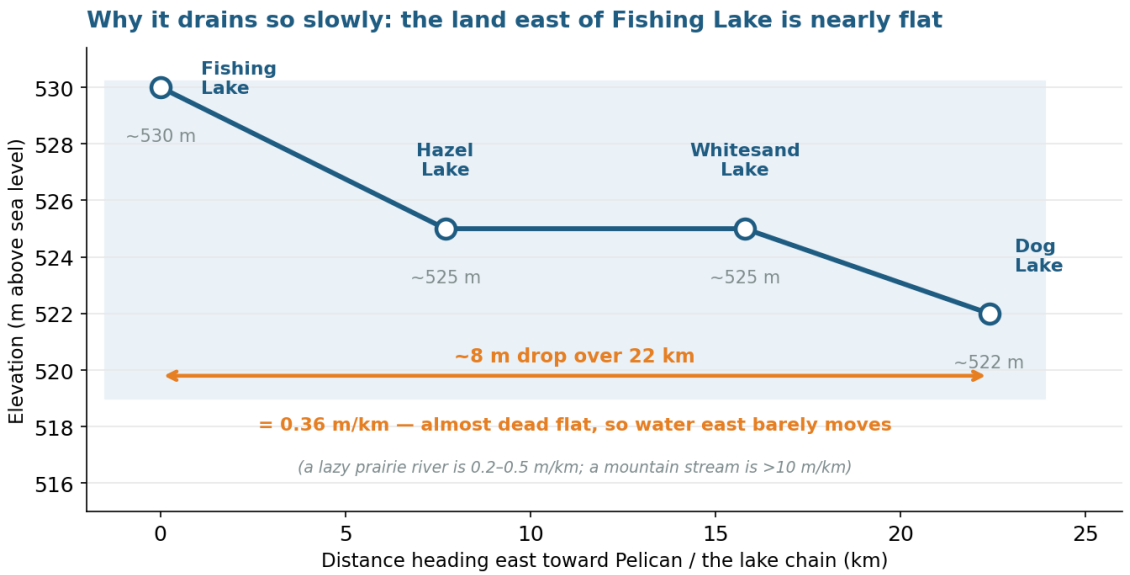


Figure 9. Elevation stepping east from Fishing Lake through the lake chain. Intermediate values are approximate (national DEM); Fishing Lake is from the gauge.

Waterbody (heading east)	Approx. elevation	Distance from Fishing L.
Fishing Lake	~530 m	0 km
Hazel Lake	~525 m	~8 km
Whitesand Lake	~525 m	~16 km
Dog Lake	~522 m	~22 km

What the slope tells you

Only about **8 metres of drop over 22 kilometres** — a gradient of **0.36 m/km**. A lazy prairie river falls 0.2–0.5 m/km; a mountain stream more than 10. So this water is barely pulled downhill — it **creeps** east rather than races. That is the physical reason the lake can't empty itself quickly, and why the channel (with its weirs and gates) was needed. It matches exactly what WSA is seeing on the ground in 2026: gates open, weir removed, and still "only minimal outflow."

8. How much water actually leaves — flow by year

If the lake spills east, how much water actually flows out, and does it change year to year? The individual lakes in the chain (Hedley, Hazel, Whitesand, Dog, Silver, Newburn) are **not gauged** — but the **Whitesand River near Canora**, downstream of the whole system, is. Its peak flow each year is the best measure of how much water the chain sheds:

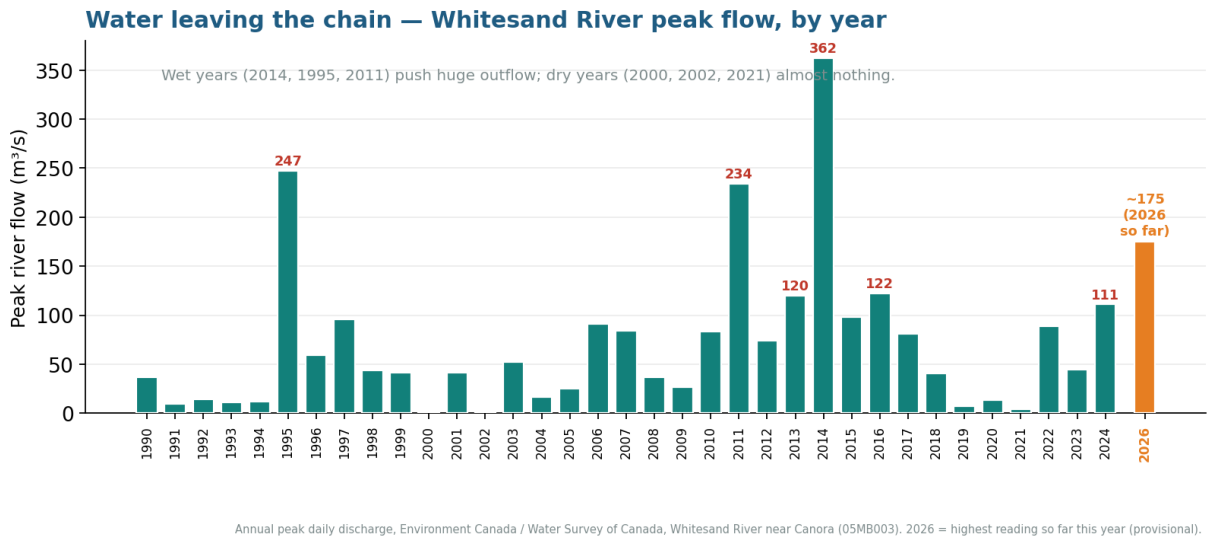


Figure 10. *Whitesand River near Canora (05MB003) — the outflow of the whole chain — peak flow each year, 1990–2024, with 2026 so far.*

⍰ Feast or famine — and it lines up with the lake

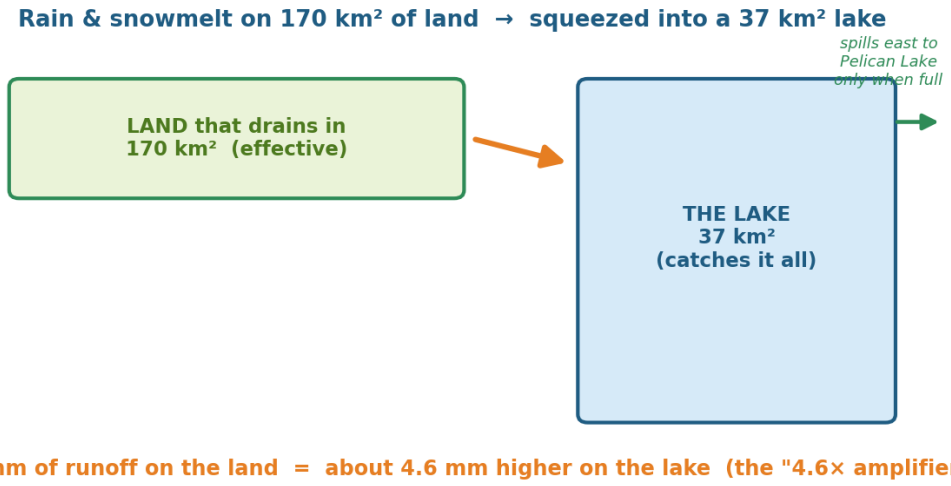
In wet years the river roars: **362 m³/s in 2014, 247 in 1995, 234 in 2011**. In dry years it nearly stops — under 4 m³/s in 2000, 2002 and 2021. 2026 is already near **175 m³/s and climbing**. Notice the match: the biggest river-flow years (2011, 2014) are the same years Fishing Lake hit its record highs. Same wet cycle, whole system responding together.

ℹ Why not a number for each lake?

Prairie lakes like Hazel, Whitesand and Dog don't carry their own gauges — the province meters the **lake** (Fishing) and the **river that drains the entire chain** (Whitesand). So we can show the system's total outflow over the years, but not each lake on its own. That instrumentation simply doesn't exist out here.

9. The math — turning weather into a lake level

This is the part that lets anyone "run the numbers." It's a balance sheet for water: what comes in, minus what goes out, tells you how much the level moves.



So 1 mm of runoff on the land = about 4.6 mm higher on the lake (the "4.6× amplifier")

Figure 11. The core idea: a lot of land drains into a much smaller lake, so runoff gets concentrated.

> ✖ **The single most useful number: the 4.6× amplifier**
>
> Rain and snowmelt fall on about **170 km² of land** but collect into a lake of only **37 km²**. That's ~4.6 times smaller — so **every 1 mm of runoff on the land raises the lake about 4.6 mm.** In a very wet year the draining land expands and the multiplier climbs toward 12×, which is how the lake jumps more than a metre in a single spring — exactly what happened in 2026.

For the technically minded

$$\text{Change in level (m)} = [\ \text{Runoff} \times 170.4\ \text{km}^2 + (\text{Rain} - \text{Evaporation}) \times 37\ \text{km}^2 - \text{Channel out}\ ] \div 37\ \text{km}^2$$

Every 1 metre of lake level equals **36.8 million cubic metres** of water in storage — the conversion between "volume of water" and "height on the gauge."

The building blocks

Two simple tables: the first shows how much runoff pushes the lake UP; the second shows what pulls it DOWN.

Runoff in a spring	Lake goes UP by
A little (dry year)	+4.6 cm
Average	+14 cm
A lot (wet year)	+28 cm
Very wet	+42 cm
2011/2026-style extreme	+56 cm

What removes water	Lake goes DOWN by
A summer of evaporation	−20 to −40 cm
Channel gently (1 m^3/s, 100 days)	−24 cm
Channel harder (2 m^3/s, 100 days)	−47 cm
Channel wide open (5 m^3/s, 100 days)	−117 cm

> ⍰ **The heart of the flood problem**
>
> A big wet spring adds **40–56 cm in a matter of weeks**. Evaporation and the channel only remove a similar amount over a **whole summer** — and on this flat land the channel moves even less. Water comes in fast and leaves slow, so once the lake is high it **stays high for months to years**.

10. Putting it together: what a year does

Combining the ups and downs, here's the net change for six kinds of year. Green means the lake falls (more room); red means it rises (flood risk).

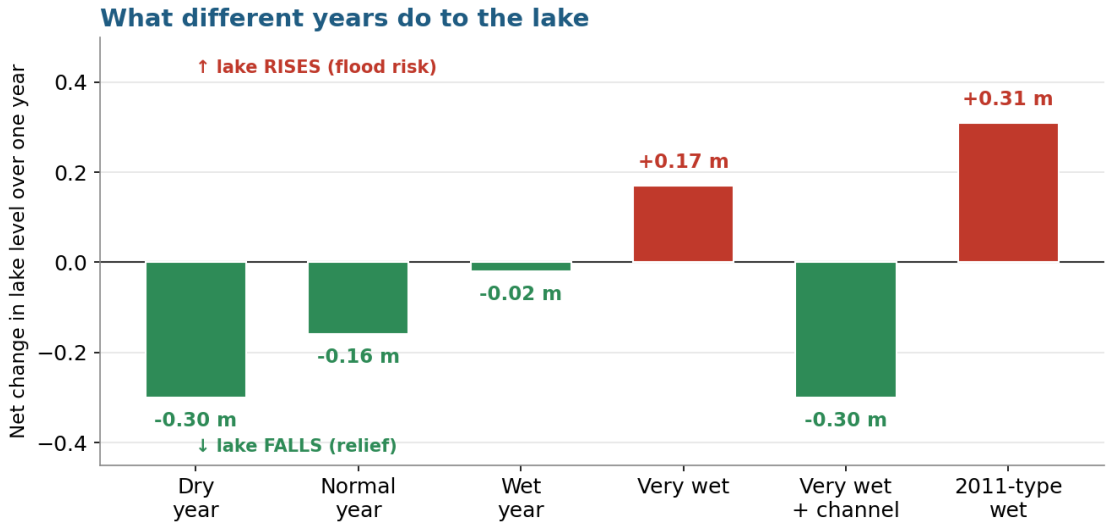


Figure 12. *Net one-year change for each scenario. 2026 is a "very wet" year where even an open channel couldn't outpace the inflow.*

What the chart is really saying

In dry or normal years the lake takes care of itself and slowly drops. It only climbs in **wet-to-extreme years** — like 2026. The channel helps most **after** the peak, speeding the drop back toward normal.

11. Looking ahead: rain, wind, and whether to sandbag

Two forward-looking questions matter now that the lake is sitting at a record: how much more water might arrive, and could wind push the lake over the berms. And the practical one the community is asking - **should we sandbag everywhere?**

The rain trend — why 2026 is so wet

The nearest active rain gauge is at **Yorkton, about 60 km southeast** — the local stations (Foam Lake, Margo, Kuroki) were discontinued decades ago. Yorkton's record shows exactly what drove 2026: a fairly ordinary spring, then an **extraordinary June**.

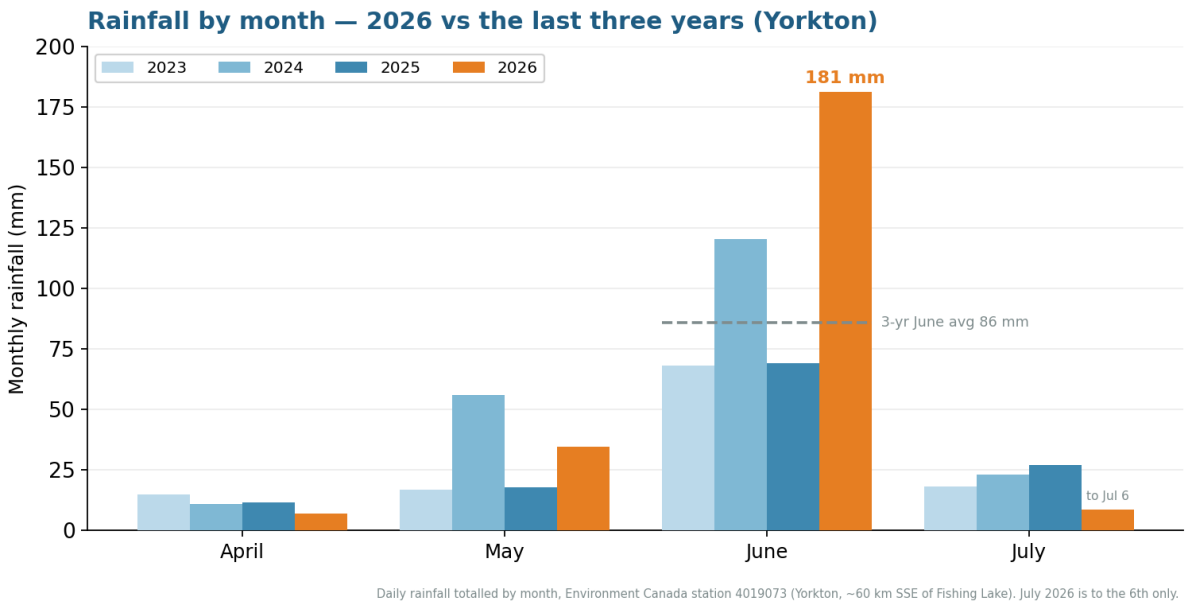


Figure 13. *Monthly rainfall at Yorkton for 2026 versus the previous three years. April and May 2026 were unremarkable; June was off the scale.*

June 2026 was the trigger

June 2026 delivered 181 mm of rain at Yorkton — more than double the previous three years' June average (86 mm), and roughly 2.3× the long-term normal (~77 mm). **Nearly 80 mm fell in the last three days of June alone.** That deluge landed on lakes that were already full and ground that was already saturated, which is exactly why the lake surged to a record in late June and early July. It squares with WSA's "record summer rainfall" statement and the Whitesand River's high flow.

ℹ An honest limit on forecasting

No one can reliably predict rain beyond about a week or two, and I have not tried to. What the evidence supports is a **statement of exposure, not a forecast**: the system is primed, so the **consequences of any further heavy rain are now outsized**. That is the useful thing to plan around.

Wind and waves — the hidden risk

Even at a fixed lake level, wind is dangerous on a lake this big (~10 km of open water for wind to work across). On the **downwind shore** it does two things: it piles water up (set-up), and it throws waves that run up the shore (run-up).

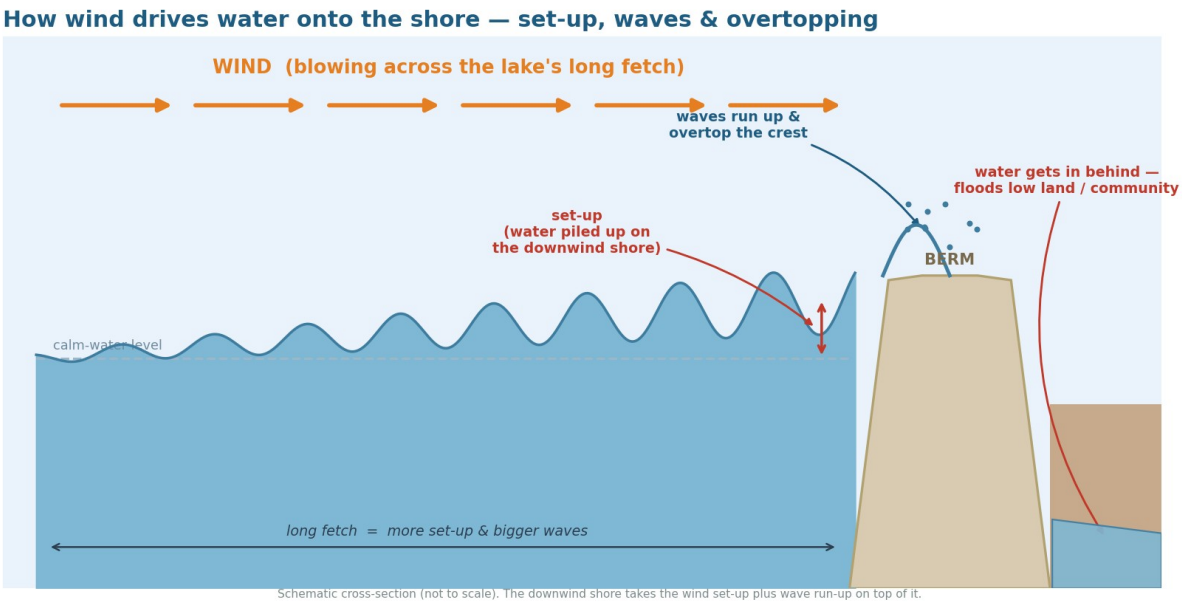


Figure 14. *How a wind event loads the downwind shore: water piles up (set-up) and waves run up and overtop the berm — and can flood the low land behind it.*

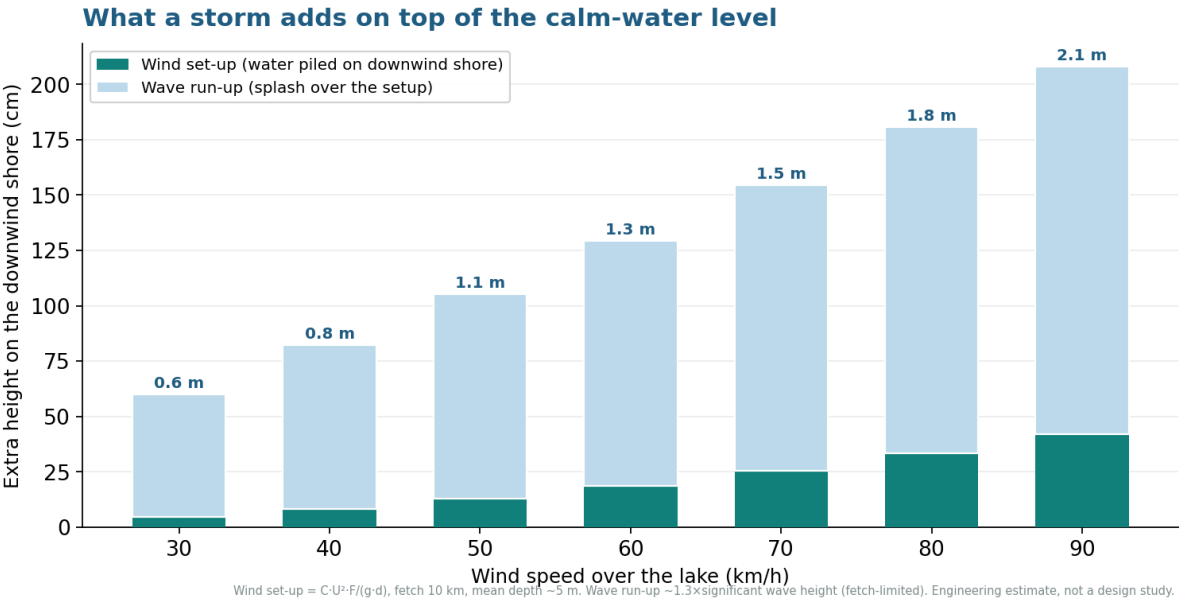


Figure 15. *Extra height on the downwind shore during a wind event, on top of the calm-water level. A 70 km/h wind adds roughly 1.5 m of water attack; a severe 90 km/h storm about 2 m.*

Why “still below the berm” can be misleading

A 70 km/h northwest blow adds about **25 cm of set-up plus ~1.3 m of wave run-up** on the south/east shore — roughly **1.5 m of extra water attack above the calm level**. So a berm sitting half a metre above today's calm water can still be **overtopped by waves** in a strong wind. WSA warns of exactly this. Wind, not just the slow rise in level, is what causes sudden shoreline flooding on a given day.

How often, and from which direction?

A fair question from the community: how often do strong winds hit, and from which direction? The lake sits between the two nearest active stations — **Wynyard (~45 km west) and Yorkton (~60 km southeast)** — the

gauges once at the lake (Wadena, Foam Lake, Kuroki) were shut down years ago. Pooling both stations gives a rough estimate for the lake itself.

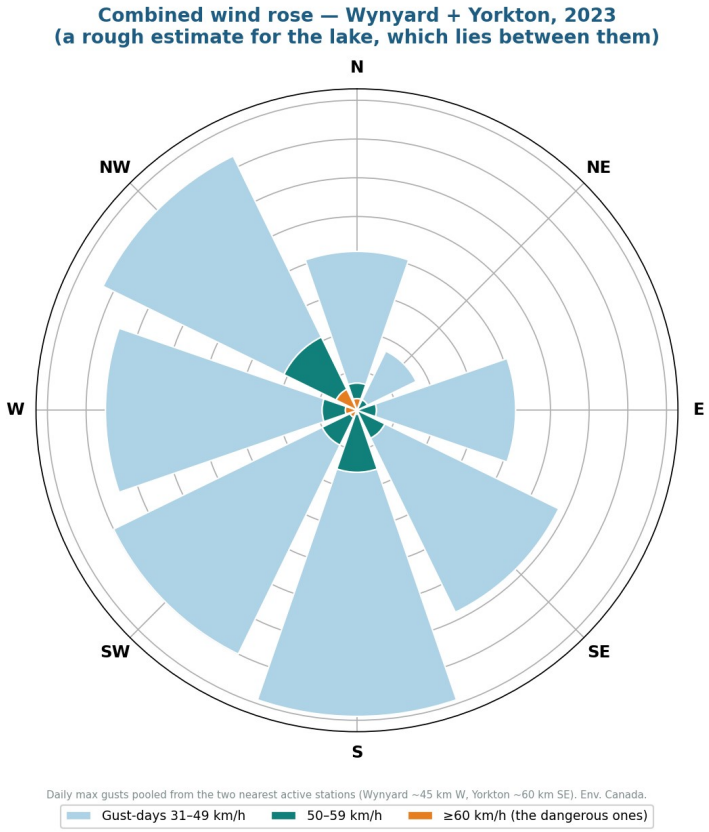


Figure 16. *Combined wind rose (Wynyard + Yorkton, 2023): how many days the strongest gust came from each direction, by speed — a rough estimate for the lake, which lies between the two stations.*

Strong winds come from the western–southern half — toward the lake's far shores

Averaging the two nearest stations, a typical year sees roughly **40 days with gusts ≥50 km/h, ~8 days ≥60, and about 1 day ≥70** — which fits the "two to four really bad ones a year" locals describe. The direction is clear: the strong winds come from the whole **western-to-southern arc — south, southwest, west and northwest**. (The two stations lean a little differently — Wynyard toward S–SW, Yorkton toward W–NW — and the lake, between them, gets both.) Those winds push water and waves onto the lake's **north, northeast, east and southeast shores**; a northwest wind specifically loads the low southeast outlet.

Reading the 2.1 m figure correctly

That 2.1 m is the **severe case — a ~90 km/h storm** — which is rare (the strongest gust at either station in 2023 was ~74 km/h). The **recurring** threat is the more common **55–70 km/h gust from the western–southern half**, which still stacks roughly **1–1.5 m of water and waves on the downwind shore** — enough to overtop a low berm. So when a strong blow is forecast, note the direction: a **south/southwest** wind threatens the north and northeast shores; a **west/northwest** wind the east and southeast shores and the low outlet.

For the **live side** — watching an incoming blow's speed, gusts and direction in real time — the free **Windy app (windy.com)** is excellent (it runs the ECMWF model); use it alongside the WSA lake level.

Caveat: this is a **rough two-station, single-year estimate** — the lake's real wind can differ with local terrain and the water itself. A **10-year pull from both stations** would firm up the probabilities by direction, and it is straightforward to do.

A week at a time, hour by hour

You can also watch the wind week by week. Here is a recent week from Wynyard — a **calm-to-moderate week** (mostly under 25 km/h), which is part of why the lake held steady rather than getting wind-driven overtopping. When a strong system moves through, the line spikes well above this and the direction locks into the western–southern arc.

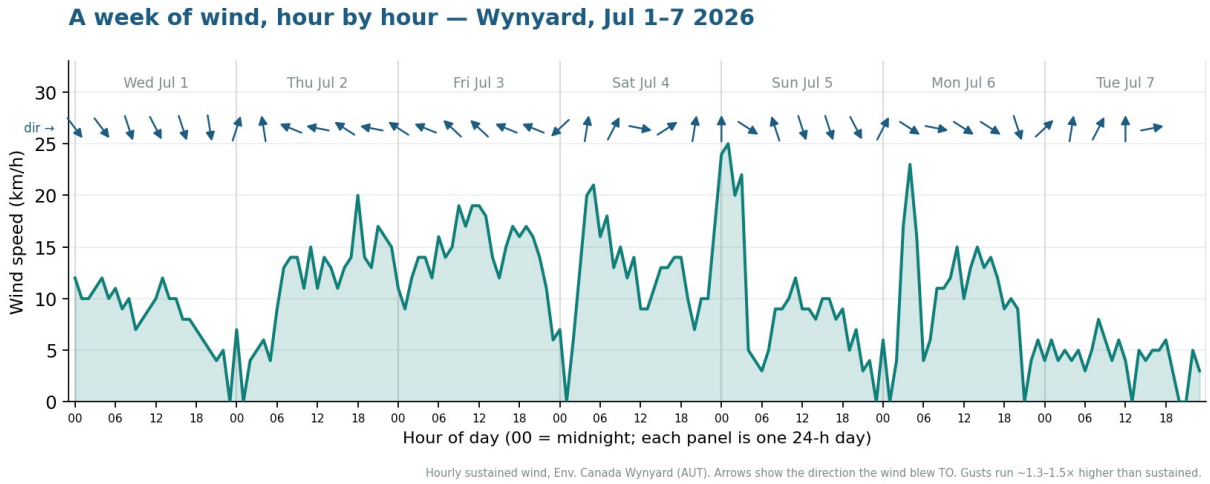


Figure 17. *A week of hourly wind at Wynyard (Jul 1–7, 2026) — one 24-hour panel per day, with arrows showing the direction the wind blew toward. Gusts run ~1.3–1.5× higher than the sustained speeds shown.*

Putting it together — the storm risk stack

On a calm day the shore only sees the still-water level. In a storm, the downwind shore can see all of these stacked on top of each other:

Contribution (downwind shore, storm)	Height
Today's calm-water level	≈ 530.9 m (rising)
Further seasonal rise if wet continues	+0.1 to +0.3 m
Wind set-up (50–90 km/h)	+0.1 to +0.4 m
Wave run-up (50–90 km/h)	+0.9 to +1.7 m
→ Plan the downwind shore to take	up to ~1–2 m above today's calm level

Should we sandbag everywhere?

⍰ Prioritise — and err toward caution at the low points

Protecting every metre of shoreline is costly, so focus the effort — but **where there is any doubt at a low spot, bag it**. The highest-risk places, in order: **(1) The low spots and natural spill points** — anywhere the berm or ground is low, and especially the outlet and low areas where the lake is already near the road and will spill into farmland first. **(2) Lowest freeboard** — any shore sitting less than roughly 0.7 m above today's level. **(3) Wind-exposed shores** — the south and east shores take the worst set-up and waves from the prevailing northwest winds. **(4) What's behind it** — homes, the regional park, roads and services. Keep a reserve of bags and material, watch the WSA level and a wind forecast **together** — the

free Windy app (windy.com) is excellent for wind speed, gusts and direction — and raise protection ahead of a forecast blow — not after it starts.

? Local knowledge: the low points decide this

Freeboard around Fishing Lake varies enormously. In some places the berm stands **3–4 feet (about 1.0–1.2 m) above the water**; in others — some beaches and low road crossings — the water is **already level with the road, with no berm at all**. Those zero-freeboard spots, and the low outlet areas where the lake is nearly up to the road, are where it will **spill first — into farmland**. That is where sandbags belong. Tie it back to the wind numbers above: a 3–4 ft berm still has margin on a calm day, but a strong-wind wave event (1–2 m) can overtop even that — while a level-with-the-road spot has **no margin left right now**.

? Watch your flank — water can arrive from behind

A wall of sandbags along the lakefront does no good if the water simply goes around it. Where the land around a community or property is **lower than the lakefront** — a nearby low area or spill point — the lake can push through that low ground and flood the community from the **side or behind**, defeating a barrier that only faces the water. So assess the **whole low perimeter**, not just the water's edge: map every low route the water could take to reach you, and protect or plan for those too. In some places the back or flank, not the shore, is the real weak point.

⚠ Planning estimate, not a design study

The set-up numbers assume a 10 km fetch and ~5 m mean depth (shallow bays get **more** — set-up grows as the water gets shallower). Wave figures are engineering rules of thumb for run-up on an open slope; a berm's real overtopping depends on its exact shape and height. For anything you build to, use **surveyed berm-crest elevations and a proper wave/freeboard study**.

12. Other things worth keeping on the radar

Lake level is the headline, but a closed basin at record height brings a few knock-on issues that are easy to overlook. None of these are meant to alarm — they're just worth having on the community's radar.

What to watch	Why it matters for you
Wind & waves	Even when the lake is below the top of a berm, strong winds shove water and drive waves that can wash over it — WSA flags this directly. Short-term shoreline flooding can happen on a windy day at an otherwise "safe" level.
Groundwater & septic	A high lake raises the water table nearby. That can mean wet basements, failing or backed-up septic fields, and well contamination — even for properties set back from the shore.
Ice (winter & spring)	High water plus ice can heave and shove against docks, shorelines and berms over winter, and spring ice push can damage infrastructure.
How long it lasts	This is not a flash flood that recedes in days. A closed basin can stay high for months or years. Plan seasonal access, storage and insurance around a prolonged high stand, not a quick spike.
Berm margin & seepage	Worth knowing how much freeboard is left before overtopping, and watching berms for seepage, soft spots or boils. Clarify who inspects and maintains each stretch.

What to watch	Why it matters for you
Water quality & algae	A closed basin concentrates nutrients; inundated septic and shoreline runoff can worsen algae blooms and affect swimming, fish and cottage water.
Upstream drainage	New or unapproved drainage upstream adds inflow to a lake that can't easily shed it. This is a lever the community and WSA can actually act on (drainage approvals & compliance).
Downstream neighbours	Sending water east affects landowners on Hazel, Whitesand and Dog Lakes and, ultimately, Manitoba — coordination and goodwill matter for keeping the channel operating.
Data gaps to push for	The inflow creeks are no longer gauged, there is no public depth-to-volume map, and the lake gauge isn't in the national live feed. Asking WSA for these would sharpen every forecast.
Help & paperwork	Two programs exist: EFDRP (funds emergency protection like berms/pumps) and PDAP (helps with uninsurable losses). Photograph any damage now and keep receipts — claims need documentation.
Leading indicators	Next spring's risk is signalled months ahead by fall soil moisture and winter snowpack. Watching WSA's snow surveys and runoff forecast gives early warning.

The realistic bottom line

Because the land is so flat and the basin closed, the community's practical levers are limited but real: **run the channel hard on the way down**, **keep berms sound**, **limit new upstream drainage**, and **plan for high water to linger**. The lake will come down — it just takes months, not days.

13. Our assessment & outlook

Pulling the evidence in this briefing together, here is our read of where things stand and what it implies. This is **informed judgement based on the data presented** — not an official or engineering determination (see the note at the end of this section).

What we believe the data shows

- **The lake reached a record ~530.9 m and has plateaued.** The steep climb stopped around July 5; it peaked near 530.90 m and, at 530.89 m on July 8, is essentially flat — possibly just beginning to ease, but not yet in a clear decline.
- **A fast self-correction is unlikely.** The outlet is almost dead flat (~0.36 m/km) and the channel moves only minimal water, so the lake sheds high water over months to years, not weeks. After the 2011 peak it took roughly a decade to fall about a metre.
- **The near-term danger is rain and wind on top of a full lake.** June 2026 dropped about 2.3× the normal rainfall onto already-full lakes; and on any given day a strong wind can throw 1–2 m of set-up and waves at the south and east shores.
- **So this is a prolonged high-water season, not a passing spike.** Elevated risk will persist through the summer and very likely beyond.

- **The weak points are wherever there is no berm.** Freeboard ranges from 3–4 feet in bermed stretches down to zero where some beaches and roads sit at water level; the low outlet areas are nearly up to the road and will spill into farmland first. Those points — not the well-bermed shoreline — decide how much damage this high water actually does.

What we would do about it

Our recommendation

Treat this as **prolonged high water**. **Keep targeted sandbagging and berm protection in place** on the lowest and most wind-exposed shores (generally south and east, facing the prevailing northwest winds), and **do not remove it on the assumption the lake will drop quickly** — the data says it will not. Prioritise the **low spots and natural spill points**, and remember that protecting only the lakefront can leave a community exposed if water reaches it through lower ground from the **side or behind** — so assess the whole low perimeter. Watch the WSA level and a wind forecast together (the free Windy app, windy.com, shows wind speed, gusts and direction well), and raise protection ahead of forecast storms. The signal that it is safe to stand down is a **sustained downward trend on the gauge combined with a run of dry weeks** — not a single dry spell.

Honest disclaimer

⚠ **About this assessment (yes — we are doing this too)**

In the same spirit as the agencies whose data we used: this assessment is built **only on the data we could get our hands on** — public gauges, climate records, satellite imagery and government reports. Some of it is **preliminary and unverified**, a few gaps were filled with reasonable estimates, and a town gauge 60 km away stood in for rainfall at the lake. It **may not be perfectly accurate** and is **not an official or engineering determination**. What it is: honestly sourced, transparent about its limits, and a **solid foundation** for understanding the situation and planning next steps. Please confirm anything that money or safety depends on with the Water Security Agency and qualified professionals.

14. Sources — free to share with the community

This briefing pulls from several public, authoritative sources: **current lake levels** from the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency (gauge 05MB013); **historical levels** from Environment Canada / Water Survey of Canada; and **elevations, distances and lake positions** from Natural Resources Canada. Share these links freely so neighbours can check the numbers themselves.

- **WSA Fishing Lake page (current conditions & management):** wsask.ca — Fishing Lake
- **Live hourly gauge chart for Fishing Lake:** wsask.ca hydrograph 05MB013
- **All near-real-time lake & river gauges:** WSA — Assiniboine River Watershed levels
- **The gauge's official history:** Environment Canada Wateroffice — station 05MB013
- **All historical daily levels (for graphing):** Government of Canada hydrometric data (05MB013)
- **Historical monthly means, back to 1978:** Government of Canada monthly data (05MB013)
- **Land elevations (the flat-slope numbers):** Government of Canada elevation service (CDEM)
- **The 2010 flood-control & channel plan:** Government of Saskatchewan backgrounder (PDF)
- **Live wind, gusts & direction forecast:** Windy (windy.com)
- **Disaster assistance (if flooded):** Provincial Disaster Assistance Program (SPSA)

⚠ Important — please read before relying on these numbers

The 2026 lake levels come from WSA's near-real-time gauge, which WSA describes as **"preliminary... with limited or no verification."** Later quality-checking can change the official record. WSA and the Government of Saskatchewan provide the data "as is," accept **no liability** for its accuracy, completeness or timeliness, and ask that anyone relying on it **independently confirm the figures**. In plain terms: treat this document as a well-sourced community briefing, **not an official or engineering record** — verify with WSA before making any decision that money or safety depends on. Full disclaimer is on the WSA website (linked above).

15. Quick glossary

Term	In plain words
Closed / endorheic basin	A lake whose only real outlet is a high overflow — like a bathtub with the drain up near the rim.
Datum (geodetic)	The zero-point for measuring height. Geodetic = true height above sea level.
Drainage area	The land that sheds rain and snowmelt into the lake.
Gradient / slope	How much the land drops per kilometre. Small number = flat = slow water.
Runoff	The share of rain/snowmelt that runs off into the lake instead of soaking in.
m^3/s	Cubic metres per second — river speed. 1 m^3/s = 1,000 litres every second.
Weir / relief channel	The engineered outlet and gates used to move water out after the lake peaks.
Evaporation	Water leaving the lake surface as vapour — the slow natural "drain."

ℹ A note on precision

Current conditions and the record are from WSA's July 2026 update. The scenario math uses typical regional values for rain and evaporation, one average lake size, and coarse national elevation data for the lake chain. For engineering-grade numbers you'd add WSA's surveyed spill elevations and lake depth-to-volume curve, and the actual weather for the season being studied.

APPENDIX — Full-size figures

Larger versions of the maps and charts from this report, for printing or display.

Figure A1 — The whole system, end to end (Fishing Lake to Manitoba)

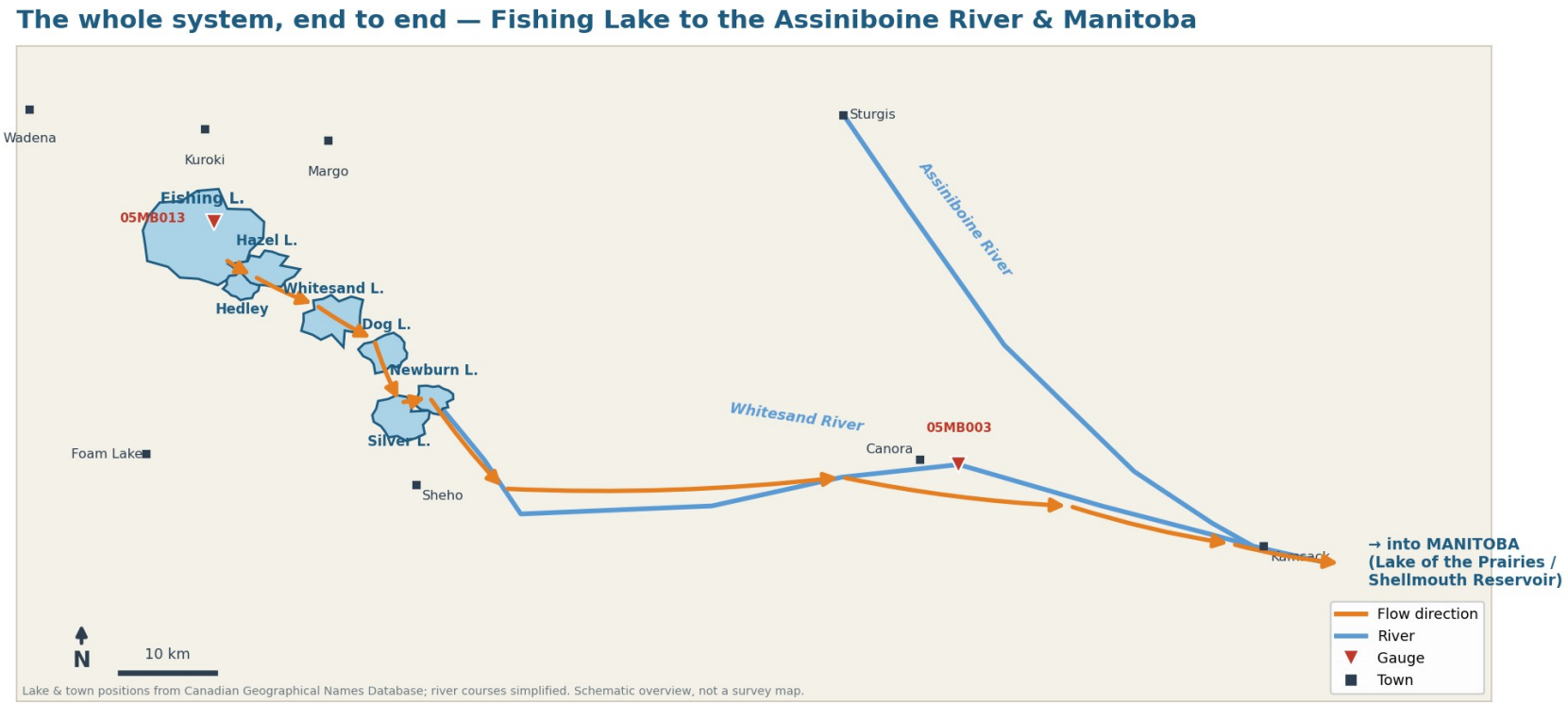


Figure A2 — Fishing Lake & the eastward flow chain (detail)

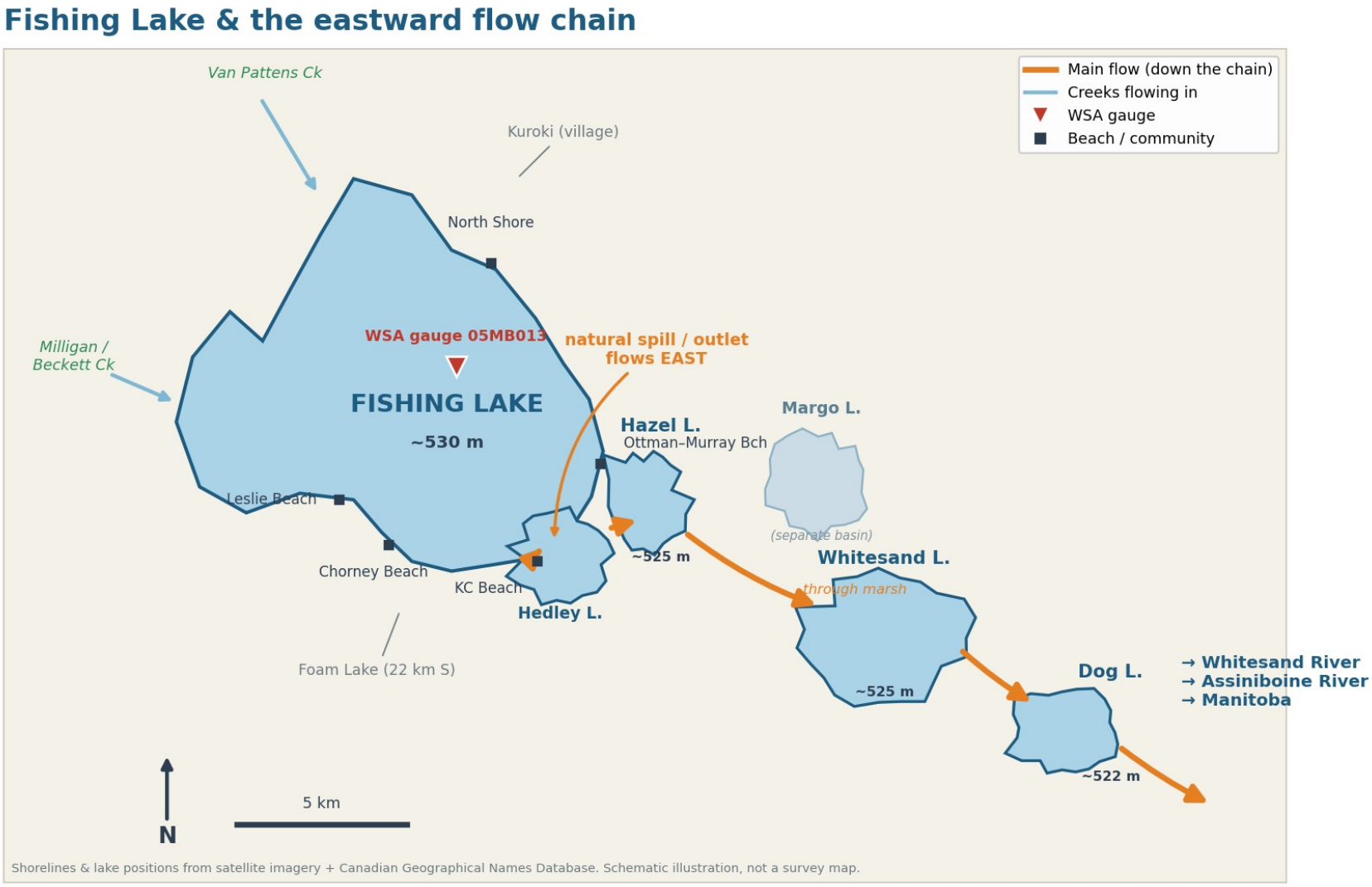
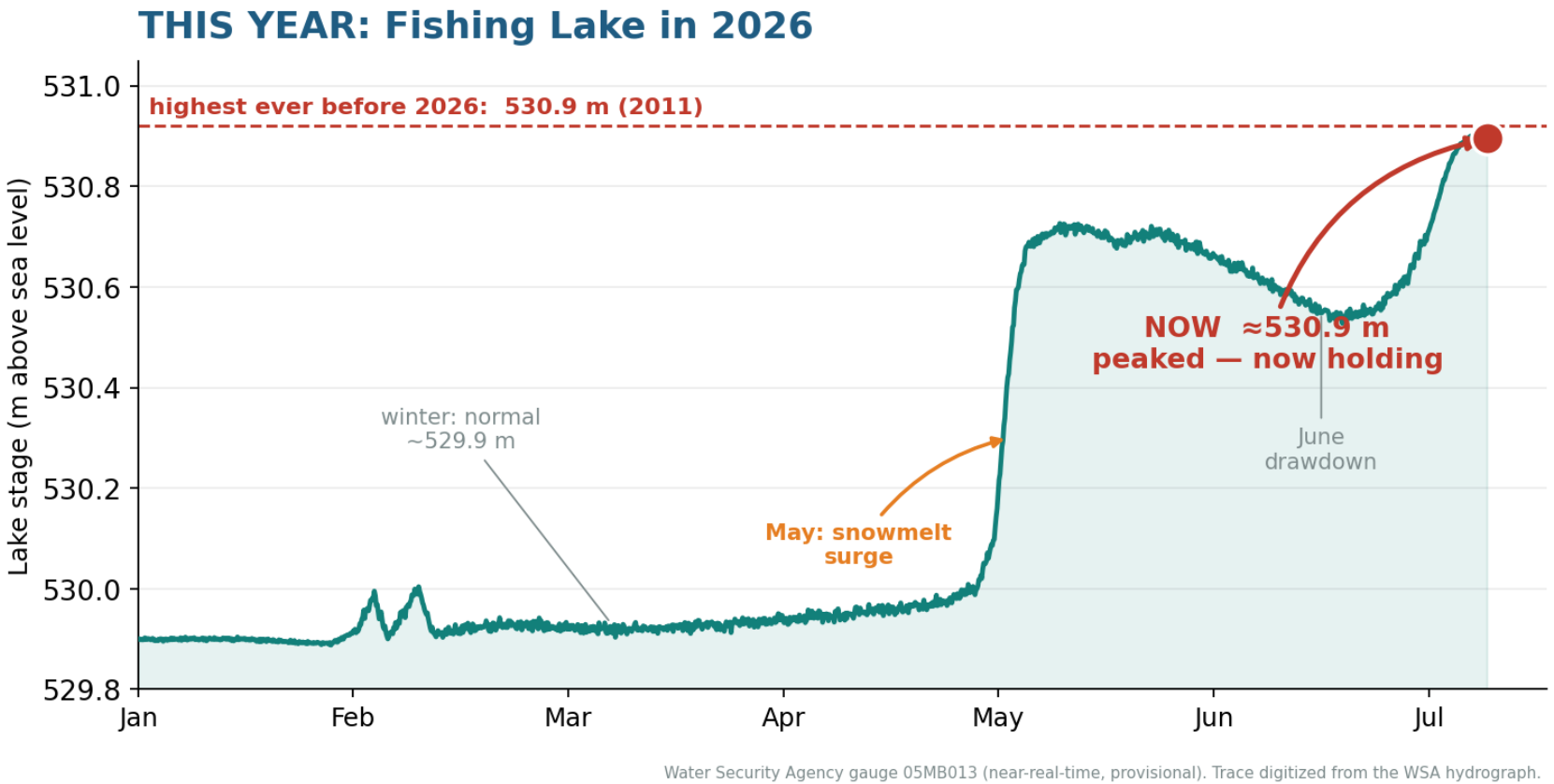
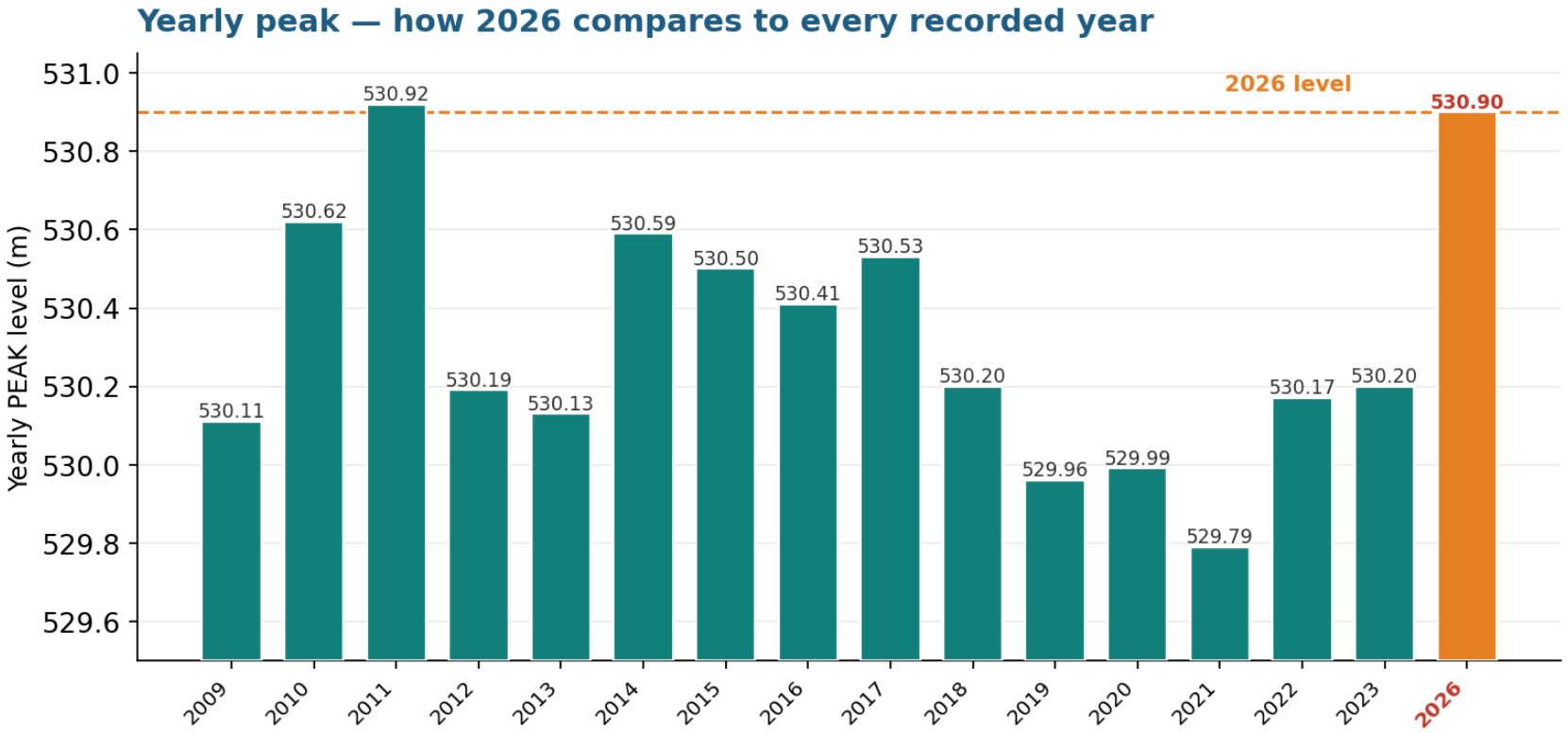


Figure A3 — Fishing Lake in 2026 (the current year)



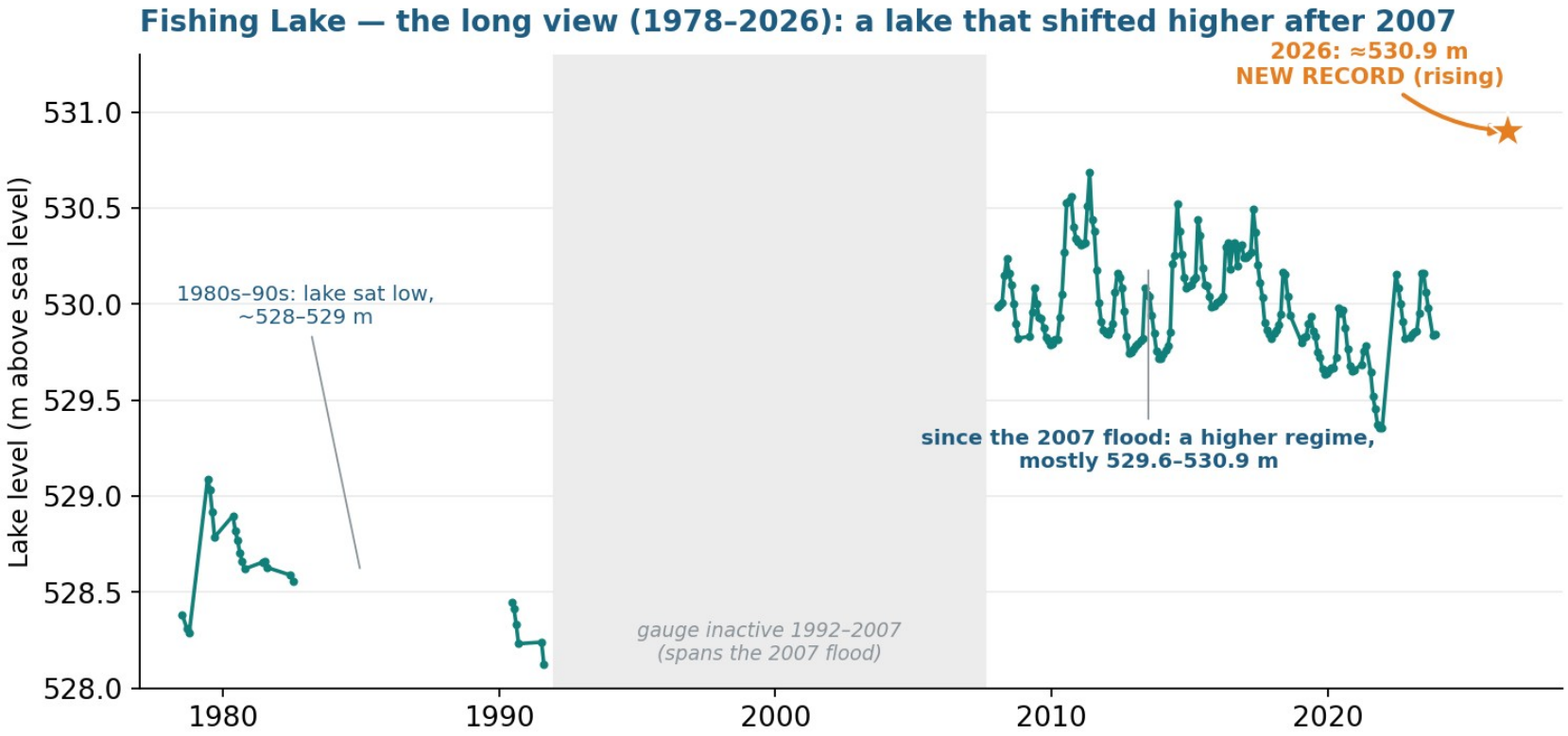
Water Security Agency gauge 05MB013 (near-real-time, provisional). Trace digitized from the WSA hydrograph.

Figure A4 — Yearly peak: how 2026 compares to every recorded year



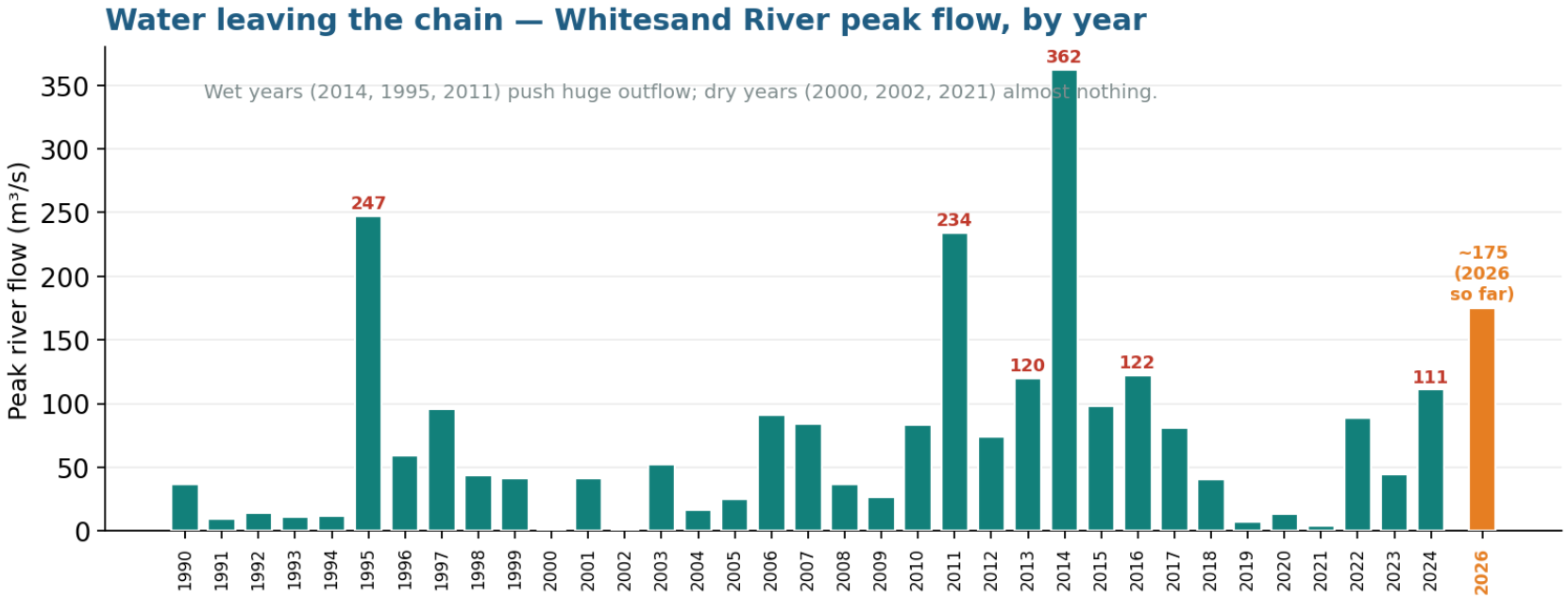
Daily peak each year, Environment Canada / Water Survey of Canada (05MB013); 2026 from WSA. Vertical axis starts at 529.5 m so differences are visible; 2024–25 not gauged.

Figure A5 — The long view, 1978–2026



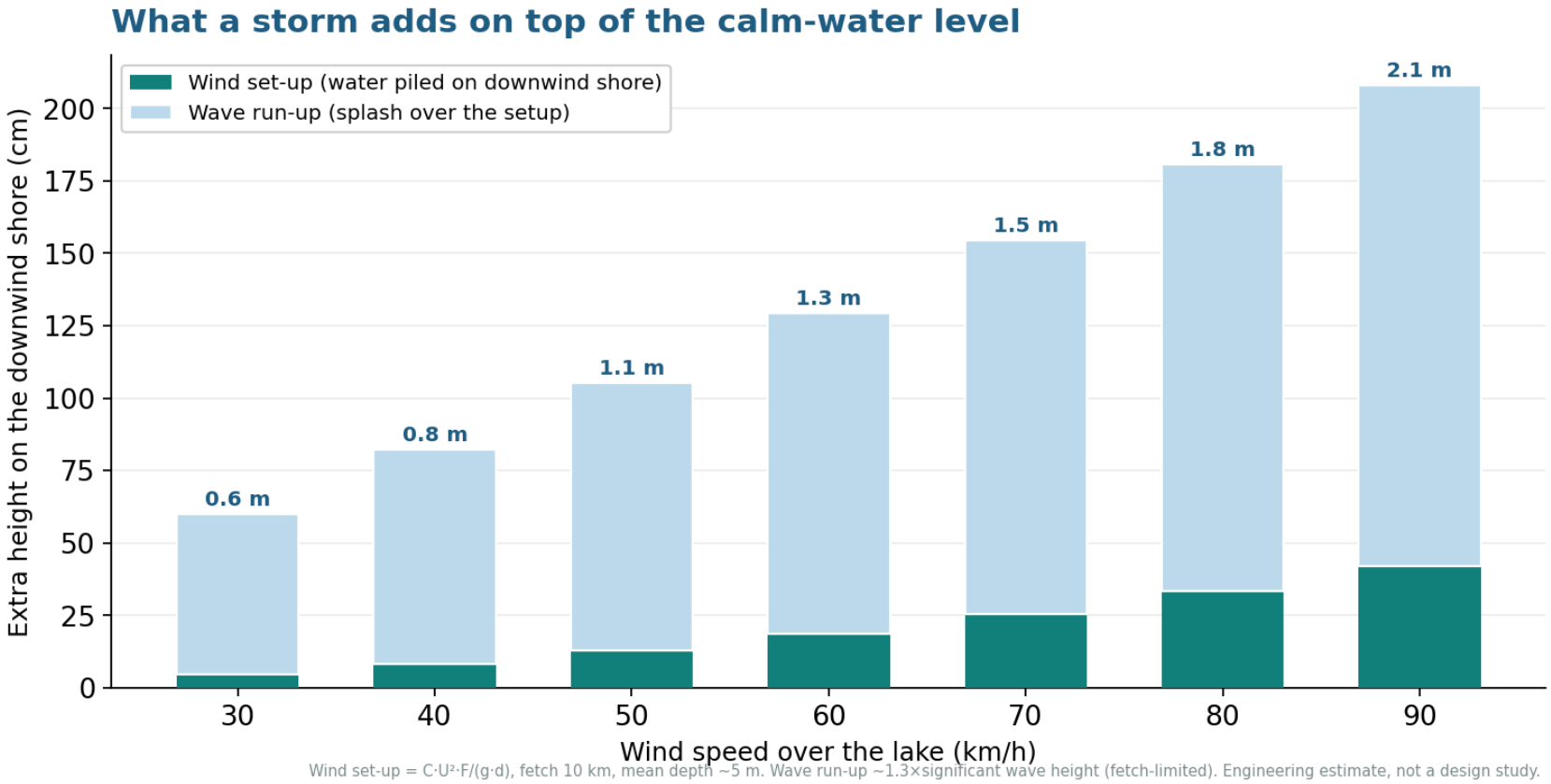
Monthly mean levels, Environment Canada / Water Survey of Canada (HYDAT) gauge 05MB013; 2026 from WSA. Blanks = no record.

Figure A6 — Whitesand River peak flow, by year



Annual peak daily discharge, Environment Canada / Water Survey of Canada, Whitesand River near Canora (05MB003). 2026 = highest reading so far this year (provisional).

Figure A7 — What a storm adds (wind set-up and waves)



Wind set-up = C·U²·F/(g·d), fetch 10 km, mean depth ~5 m. Wave run-up ~1.3×significant wave height (fetch-limited). Engineering estimate, not a design study.

Figure A8 — Rainfall by month: 2026 vs recent years (Yorkton)

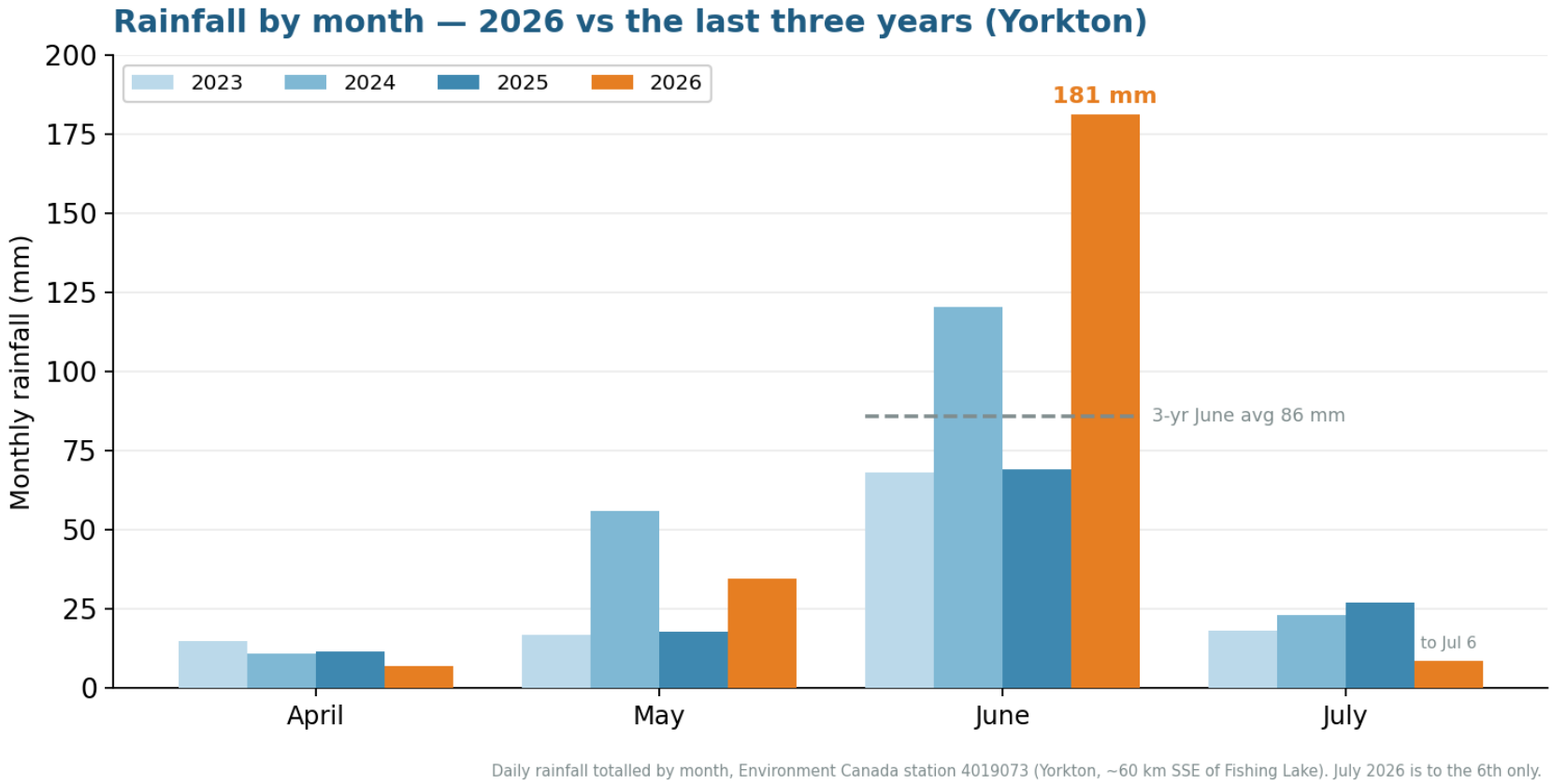


Figure A9 — Wind rose: combined Wynyard + Yorkton, 2023

Combined wind rose — Wynyard + Yorkton, 2023
(a rough estimate for the lake, which lies between them)

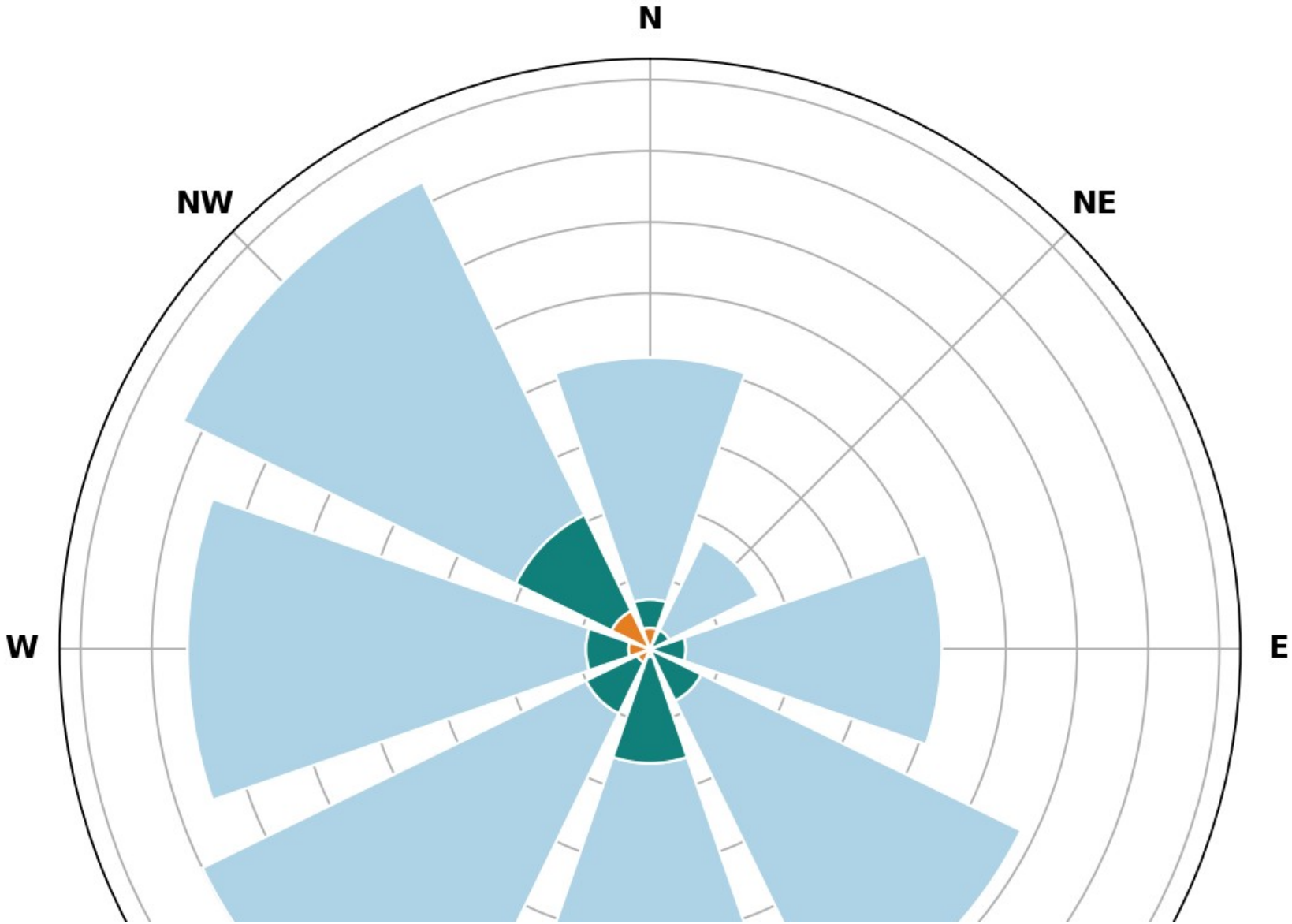
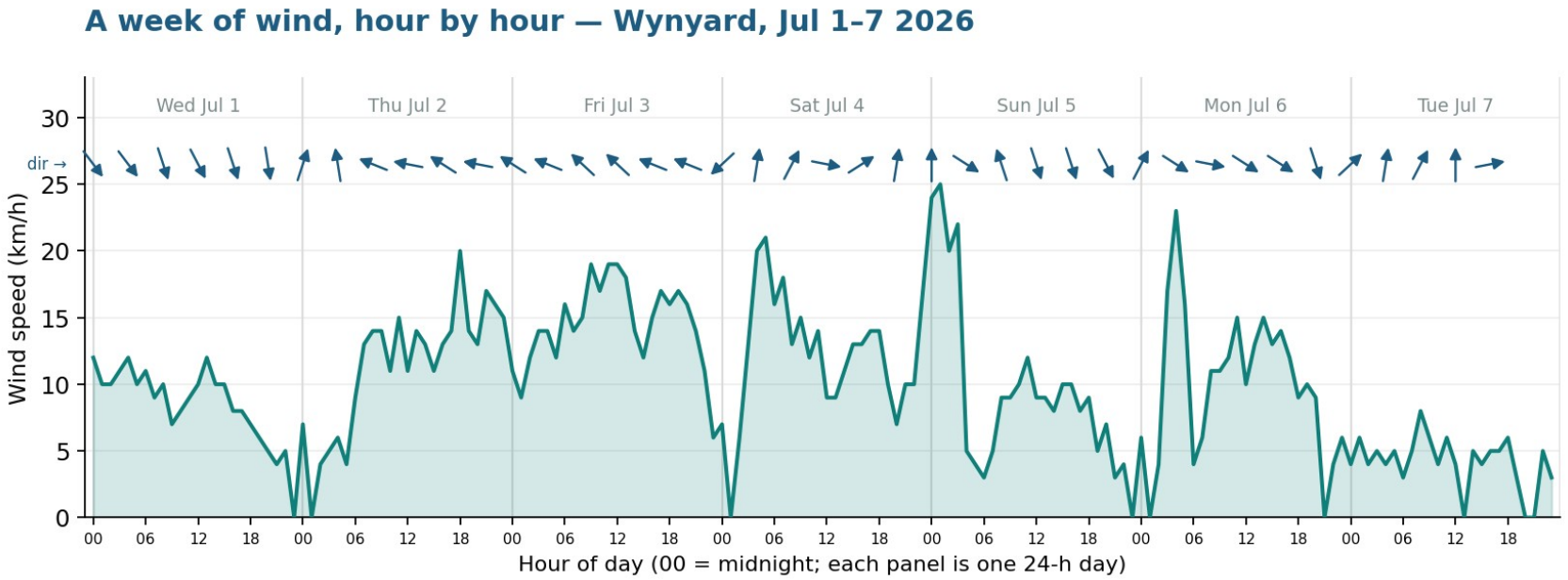
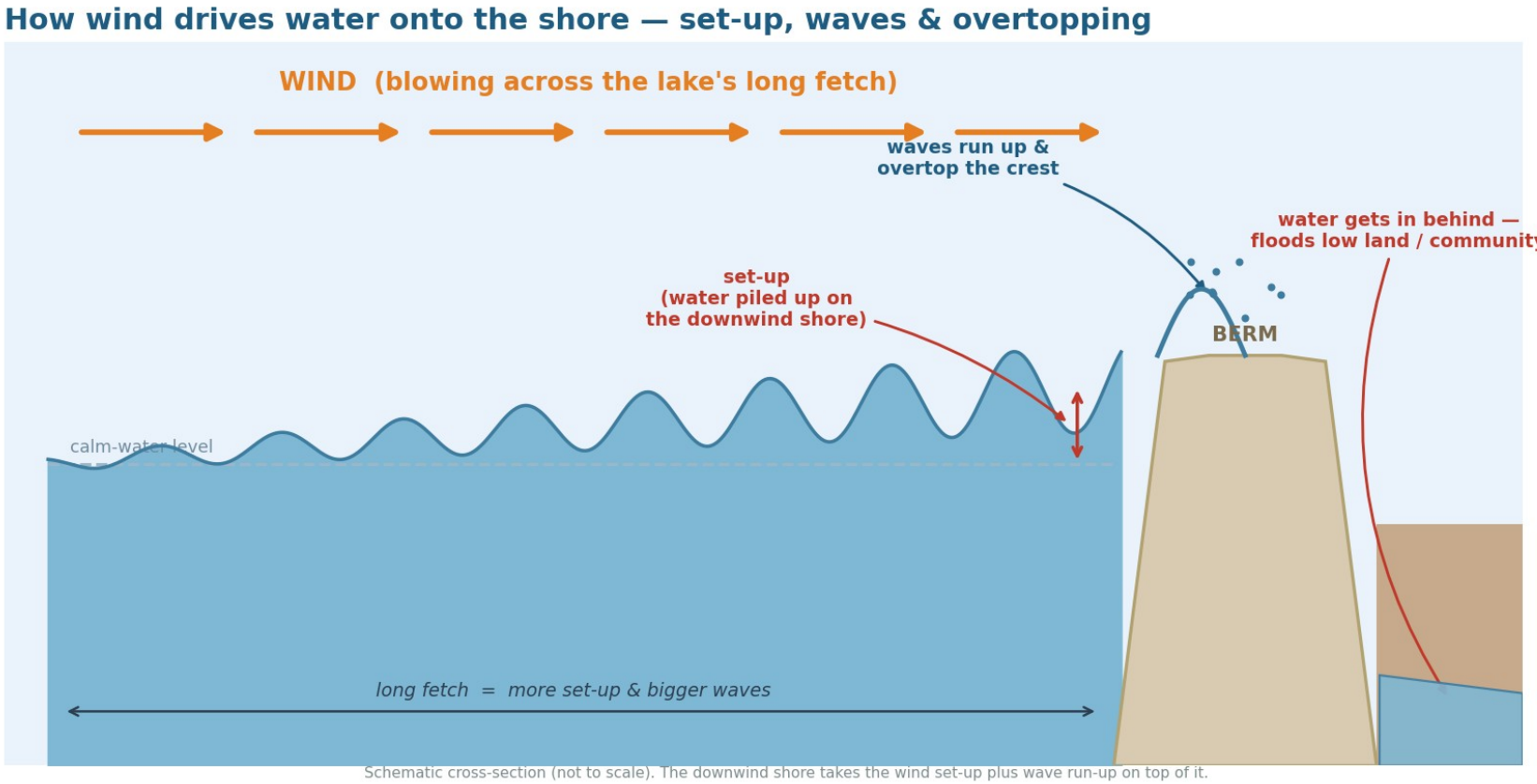


Figure A10 — A week of hourly wind (Wynyard, Jul 1–7 2026)



Hourly sustained wind, Env. Canada Wynyard (AUT). Arrows show the direction the wind blew TO. Gusts run ~1.3–1.5× higher than sustained.

Figure A11 — How wind drives water onto the shore (set-up, waves, overtopping)



Schematic cross-section (not to scale). The downwind shore takes the wind set-up plus wave run-up on top of it.